



HANFORD ADVISORY BOARD

A Site-Specific Advisory Board, Chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act

Advising:

US Department of Energy
US Environmental
Protection Agency
Washington State
Department of Ecology

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Dave Einan

US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10

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RE: Public Involvement in Vision and Guiding Documents (HAB Consensus Advice #310)

Dear Mr. Vance, Mr. Bowen, and Mr. Einan:

Background:

Transitions between administrations are an opportunity to recommit to partnership and collaboration with the public. The Hanford Advisory Board (Board) believes it is important to engage the public and solicit our values as the foundations for Hanford decisions are being established, rather than simply when decisions legally require public involvement.

There are a small number of Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) joint and individual agency documents that provide fundamental frameworks for the cleanup of Hanford. These framework documents include overarching "visions" used in setting priorities, budgets, schedules, and "principles and practices" that reflect widely applicable strategies for addressing the risks associated with waste management facilities and contaminated sites at Hanford. Vision, prioritization, and framework documents can be considered "storytelling documents" that help to shape and memorialize the way the cleanup was performed and what it was meant to achieve. The creation of these documents is an opportunity to show responsiveness to past Board advice and to address stakeholder interests and concerns before they become formal comments on decision documents that can potentially hinder cleanup.

The Board believes that it is essential that these vision, prioritization, and framework documents are informed by significant region-wide public involvement and formal Tribal consultation processes since these documents impact many foundational decisions.

For example, the Board found the past year's public involvement to be lacking for the US Department of Energy (DOE) 10-Year Strategic Vision and the Central Plateau Principles and Parameters.¹ Though neither of these documents required a formal public comment period, both of these documents should have involved more substantial public engagement and an opportunity for comment to ensure that public input informs and lends legitimacy to the decisions that will be supported by these documents.

Public involvement and dialogue regarding fundamental framework documents strengthen the legitimacy of cleanup decisions and builds support for necessary funding and the continued success of the overall mission.

Advice:

The Board believes that public involvement in the overarching principles and practices of cleanup is essential, as is reflected in the following advice.

1. The Board advises that when the agencies are faced with discretionary public involvement, that the agencies choose more not less public involvement, especially for issues or documents that meet the following criteria:
 - a. Include fundamental cleanup criteria and principles that will apply across multiple present and future cleanup decisions,
 - b. Have wide geographic applicability across the Hanford Site,
 - c. Involve a long period of time, e.g., six months or more, between the initial public involvement process and formal adoption.
2. The Board advises the TPA agencies to use a regional public and Tribal involvement process that gathers broad input for vision, prioritization, and framework documents that inform and lay the groundwork for cleanup decisions. For example, the recently adopted Central Plateau Principles and Parameters and DOE EM 10-Year Strategic Vision documents both have wide ranging implications for the final footprint of the Hanford site. Both of these documents were approved prior to enlisting meaningful public and Tribal comment.
3. The Board advises that the TPA agencies consult the Board on appropriate design and scope of public and Tribal involvement.
4. The Board advises that the Central Plateau Principles and Parameters document be afforded a public comment opportunity and have public involvement for all future updates.
5. The Board advises that DOE Environmental Management involve the public on a yearly basis with early formal review with plenty of time for comment on its annual revisions to the 10-Year Strategic Vision.
6. The Board advises the TPA agencies to conduct workshops and a visioning process with the public and Tribes on Hanford cleanup end states. This effort could discuss the final disposition of the waste tanks, buildings, reactors, and legacy contaminated soils.

¹ Additional background available in the meeting minutes for the Hanford Advisory Board meeting on June 9-10, 2021.

Sincerely,



Steve Wiegman, Chair
Hanford Advisory Board

Cc: Ike White, Acting Assistant Secretary, US Department of Energy
Todd Shrader, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, US Department of Energy
Stan Branch, Deputy Designated Federal Officer, US Department of Energy
Gary Younger, US Department of Energy
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Oak Ridge Environmental Management Site-Specific Advisory Board
Paducah Environmental Management Site-Specific Advisory Board
Portsmouth Environmental Management Site-Specific Advisory Board
Savannah River Site Environmental Management Site-Specific Advisory Board
Oregon and Washington Congressional Delegations

References:

1. Hanford Advisory Board Advice #283, "Central Plateau Inner Area Guidelines (HAB Consensus Advice #283)," dated April 9, 2015.
2. "EM Strategic Vision: 2021–2031"